THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) The Government are aware of the traditional rights of Indian fishermen for access and pilgrimage, as guaranteed under the Indo-Sri Lankan Agreement of 1974. These traditional rights include access to Kachchativu for resting, drying their nets and attending the annual St. Anthony's festival. These traditional rights, however, do not include the right to fish in and around Kachchativu.

(b) The fulfilment of the traditional rights of Indian fishermen has been in abeyance since 1983 due to adverse security conditions in the Palk Straits. From time to time, the Government have pointed out to Sri Lanka Government that our fishermen would like to enjoy these rights in an unhindered manner. The Question of the restoration of traditional rights of Indian fishermen for access to Kachchativu area, as guaranteed under the Indo-Sri Lanka Maritime Agreements of 1974 and 1976, remains under discussion between the two Governments.

Infected wastes discharged from hospitals and nursing homes

*207. SHRI JAGMOHAN: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the rising menace of solid waste, particularly the infected waste from hospitals and nursing homes;

(b) whether this has casued a serious threat to public health and environment;

(c) whether any Central law is proposed to be enacted to tackle the problem; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI KAMAL NATH): (a) and (b) Yes Sir.

(c) Government have notified the draft Bio-Medical Wastes (Management and Handling) Rules, 1995 under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986. These have been published as Draft Rules for information of the public and concerned agencies likely to be affected, inviting objections from them within a period of sixty days from the date the notification is made available to them. The final notification is required to be issued after considering these suggestions.

(d) Does not arise.

Sale of Sophisticated Submarines by France to Pakistan

*208 DR. RANBIR SINGH:
SHRI RAMNATH KOVIND:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the reported deal under negotiation for sale of sophisticated submarines Agosta-90 by France to Pakistan who is engaged in a proxy war against India by way of aiding and abetting terrorism in several parts of India including Jammu and Kashmir; and

(b) if so, whether Government have taken up with French Government impressing upon that Government to desist from sale of these submarines to Pakistan?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) Yes, Sir. On 21 September 1994, Pakistan concluded a contract with France for the purchase of three 90-B Agosta Class submarines.

(b) We have taken up the matter with the Government of France and conveyed our concerns regarding their decision to sell Agosta 90-B submarines to Pakisatn, pointing out the adverse impact this will have on our security and on regional stability.

RMS Office at Bargarh in Orissa

*209. SHRI JANARDAN YADAV: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether an office of the RMS (Railway Mail Service) located in the Bargarh town of Orissa was closed down some years ago;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether the local people or organisations have represented to Government to reopen the office; and